EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Name</th>
<th>Deerpark Montessori</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Address</td>
<td>St Mary’s Parish Hall</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Howth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Co. Dublin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>11FL0380</td>
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Date of Inspection: 26-11-2018
WHAT IS AN EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION?

The Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI) model is used to provide evaluative information, advice and support in relation to education provision in a pre-school setting participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. These inspections affirm good practice and advise actions, where appropriate, to aid the further development of education provision in the setting.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated and reported under the following headings or areas of enquiry:

1. Quality of the context to support children’s learning and development
2. Quality of processes to support children’s learning and development
3. Quality of children’s learning experiences and achievements
4. Quality of management and leadership for learning

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate’s quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the setting’s provision in each area.
Early Years Education Inspection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of inspection</th>
<th>26-11-2018</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inspection activities undertaken</td>
<td>Review of relevant documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-inspection meeting with owner and practitioner</td>
<td>Feedback meeting with owner and practitioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation of interactions during a session</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Interaction with children</td>
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CONTEXT OF SETTING

Deerpark Montessori is a privately owned, sessional setting which is based in Howth, Co. Dublin. It offers a morning, pre-school session as part of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, twenty children and two practitioners, one of whom is the owner, were present. The setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised in this report, and the response submitted on behalf of the setting can be found in the appendix of this report.

AREA 1

QUALITY OF CONTEXT TO SUPPORT CHILDREN’S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- The quality of the context to support the children’s learning and development is very good.
- There is a very friendly and warm atmosphere in the setting. The practitioners take time to welcome and greet children and their parents on arrival. During the inspection, a few parents stayed to settle their child.
- The children have ample opportunities to make independent decisions regarding the materials and equipment that they wish to engage with. The children’s self-registering, sign-in system is used very effectively to promote their self-selection and decision-making about their learning. During the inspection, the practitioners offered encouragement to children regarding what materials they could select and explore.
- The daily routine consists of predominantly whole-group learning activities, including work time, outdoor play, snack time, and circle time. Times of transitions are signalled by the practitioners’ use of a bell to inform children of changes in activities. There is potential for more strategies to be used at transition times to help children to predict what is happening next.
- Relationships between the practitioners and the children are positive and responsive. These reciprocal relationships are further strengthened through the practitioners’ use of the key person approach. This approach is one in which the practitioner develops a close, secure relationship with the child and acts as a link between the pre-school and the parents. The practitioners offer very constructive praise and encouragement to the children for their efforts during activities.
- The children’s sense of identity and belonging is supported through the facilitation of special occasions that bring the children, their families and the practitioners together. These special events include the family picnic, the Christmas concert and the celebration of festivals relevant to the children in the setting. The small amount of photographs of the children and their individual artwork on display highlights the uniqueness of each child.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to develop additional strategies to use at transition times. It is also advised that a visual schedule be used to help children predict changes in the daily routine. The use of the ‘Transitions’ pillar from the Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide could assist in this regard.
- It is advised that the practitioners source additional photographs of the children, their families, members of the local community and places of interest in the locality. These can be used in conjunction with the existing special events to help strengthen the children’s sense of identity and belonging.
AREA 2
QUALITY OF PROCESSES TO SUPPORT CHILDREN’S LEARNING AND
DEVELOPMENT

• The quality of the processes to support the children’s learning and development is good.
• The curriculum is informed by Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. Provision for
  children’s learning is underpinned by the Montessori Method of education. Planning for children’s
  learning is predominantly thematic and includes seasonal events and the practitioners’ ideas.
• The practitioners use a variety of methods to record the children’s learning; these include Aistear
  learning records, photographs and records of the children’s progress in their use of Montessori
  materials.
• The practitioners use a number of effective interaction strategies to facilitate a range of learning
  experiences. During the inspection, they sat alongside the children and role modelled what the
  child was doing; they offered children formative feedback on their achievements. The practitioners’
  occasional use of open-ended questions and comments to support children’s deeper thinking was
  noted.
• The indoor learning environment is inviting and spacious. The wide selection of Montessori
  materials are presented to children in a well-prepared and respectful manner with due regard for
  progression in their learning. During the inspection, the children had access to sensorial materials,
  and a small amount natural, open-ended and real materials.
• The children have daily access to a large outdoor area. On the day of the inspection, children
  engaged in activities that promoted the use of their gross motor skills and positive social
  interactions.
• Opportunities are proved for children to participate in creative play, imaginative play, sensorial
  and manipulative play. There is potential to develop longer periods of uninterrupted open-ended
  play to support purposeful learning.
• The practitioners are effective in the provision of appropriate mark-making experiences to support
  the development of children’s emerging literacy skills.
• The practitioners accommodate the diversity in pace of the children’s learning and development.
  They provide opportunities for children to participate in more complex and challenging learning.
  An example of this was a practitioner’s effective support for a child in the use of mathematical
  materials.

Actions advised
• The practitioners are advised to use the Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide to help further develop their
  assessment and planning practices in line with Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum
  Framework. This will help ensure that the children’s emergent interests and individual learning
  needs are incorporated into the setting’s short-term planning.
• The practitioners are advised to extend the time and opportunities for children to engage in open-
  ended, free play. This will further promote children’s purposeful learning experiences as they
  explore real, open-ended, and natural materials.
• The practitioners are advised to review their interaction strategies to ensure the consistent use of
  open-ended questions and commentary in their discussions with the children. The tip sheet
  ‘Sustained Shared Thinking from the Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide will assist in this regard.

AREA 3
QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

• The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is good.
• During the inspection, there were good examples of children’s interest in learning activities. This
  was particularly noticeable through their enthusiastic participation in the magic sand activity. There
  is potential for children to be offered more opportunities to share their interests and ideas.
• On the day of the inspection, many children experienced success and were sufficiently challenged;
  this was evident when they completed puzzles, looked after their personal belongings and through
  their mastery of the Montessori materials.
Many of the children are developing appropriate personal and social skills. During the inspection, children were observed sharing, taking turns, participating in tasks that promote social responsibility and building relationships with others.

The majority of the children demonstrate an understanding of rights and views of others. During the inspection, on a few occasions, a small number of children required the support of the practitioners to help resolve minor issues of social conflict.

Many of the children display an awareness of the meaning and use of mathematical language. This was evident in their counting of the days till Christmas, their developing classification skills and their discussions about more or less.

The children are provided with opportunities to participate in activities that promote their emergent language development through rhyming and singing activities. At the time of the inspection, there was potential for children to be offered more experiences to enhance these emerging skills.

Many of the children are capable of representing their ideas through their engagement with various media. They confidently share their playdough, sand and construction creations with their peers and the practitioners.

**Actions advised**
- The practitioners are advised to provide additional opportunities for children to collaborate and share their interests and ideas with others. The use of small-group activities facilitated by the key worker where children's thinking is extended and challenged could assist in this regard.
- The practitioners are advised to use a broader range of strategies to support the children in the development of their self-regulations skills and their ability to independently resolve minor social conflicts.
- Building on the children's developing language skills, the practitioners are advised to provide a greater variety of experiences to support the children's emergent language development. The tip sheet ‘Enhancing Language’ from the Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide would assist in this instance.

**AREA 4**

**QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- The good sense of teamwork and collaboration which was evident amongst the owner and the practitioner contributed to the smooth and fluid pre-school session.
- At the time of the inspection, the owner and practitioner informally planned and reviewed their practices. Formal self-review and professional reflection practices have yet to become part of their systematic review procedures.
- Continuing professional development is valued in the setting. Recently, the practitioners have participated in training on physical activities and on the Access and Inclusion Model. As part of their commitment to upskilling, the practitioners are due to attend curriculum training on Geography facilitated by St Nicholas Montessori.
- The practitioners proactively engage with parents and use a number of effective strategies to communicate with them regarding their child’s learning and progress. These include the setting’s ‘Parents’ Handbook’ and monthly newsletters. During springtime, meetings are facilitated between the key workers and parents to discuss their child’s learning and progress. The practice of parents being encouraged to help settle their child and remain with them until they are comfortable for the parent to leave is a regular feature of the partnership approach between the setting and home.
- Transitions into the setting are managed sensitively; timely and effective settling-in procedures are well established. The children visit the setting before commencing to meet the practitioners. Formal links have yet to be established with local primary schools.
**Actions advised**

- The practitioners are advised to develop formal self-review and professional reflection systems. The *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* could assist them to identify areas in need of improvement and to develop an action plan to address agreed prioritised areas.
- National training support in the use of *Aistear* curriculum framework is to be offered in 2019. Participation in this programme would support the practitioners as part of their continuing professional development.
- The practitioners are advised to establish links with the local primary school with a view to supporting children’s transitions from the setting to school through the sharing of information on their learning.

**CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE**

The capacity of the setting to implement the actions advised above is very good as demonstrated by the owner and the practitioner’s commitment to high quality learning experiences for the children.
### Summary of Overall Inspection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Quality Level</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of context to support children’s learning and development</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of processes to support children’s learning and development</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of children’s learning experiences and achievements</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of management and leadership for learning</td>
<td>Good</td>
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</table>

**Language used in Early-Years Education-focused Inspection reports**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Provision that is excellent is exemplary in meeting the needs of children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>Provision that is very good is highly effective in meeting the needs of children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Provision that is good is effective in meeting the needs of children but with some aspects to be developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Provision that is fair requires practice to be improved to meet the needs of children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Provision that is poor is inadequate and requires significant improvement to meet the needs of children.</td>
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APPENDIX

SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT
SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

Area 1  Observations on the content of the inspection report

Area 2  Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

Area 1. - Action taken.
- Up to now we have rung a bell when it is time to stop an activity. Since inspection we are now using a three minute timer before ringing the bell so the children have time to get ready for the change.
- We have a frieze of the child’s day on the shelf in the class but will make a frieze of the child’s day in school to put up on the wall so they will gain a visual perception of the changes to the schedule.

Area 2. - Action taken.
- To allow for more open ended free play we have introduced “free play Thursday” on the last Thursday of every month. Gymboree is also coming in on this day since January where the children play games and have fun to music. We also have free play days when it is raining and the children can’t go and play outside.
- To ensure the children’s emergent interests and individual interests are incorporated into the school day we are observing and recording the children at work and at play, including them and documenting them in more detail through short term planning and circle time activities and in the project book and observations.

Area 3. - Action taken.
- The children do lots of small group activities in the class and share interests and ideas with each other all the time. We will continue to provide more experiences to develop language skills.

Area 4.
- We are doing our parent teacher meetings at the moment where we will be discussing what primary school each child is going to. Once we know I will be in contact with the schools to discuss each child and what stage they are at.
- Arrangements are in place for staff to meet once a month to discuss our curriculum and reflect on work done.
- I have been in contact with our local count childcare committee and have put both our names down to do an Aistear/Síolta course as soon as one becomes available.